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Cultural Affairs Committee

3-2006

Marjane Satrapi

Women in the Curriculum and Women's Studies Program

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**THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS/DISTINGUISHED
LECTURE SERIES COMMITTEE
GRANT APPLICATION**

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PLEASE PLACE A COPY OF THIS COVER SHEET ON TOP OF EACH COPY

I. Applicant/Organization:

- II. a. Responsible Organization Officer: Mazie Hough
b. Title: Associate Director, Women in the Curriculum and Women's Studies Program
c. Campus Address (include EMail and Telephone): 101 Fernald Hall 581-1228

III. Summary of program requiring funding (title; featured artist(s); speaker(s); scheduled date (s):

Marjane Satrapi, author of autobiographical graphic novels about growing up in Iran will present reflections on her life and work on Thursday, October 19 at 7:00 PM. This visit is being co-sponsored by WIC/WST and the University of Southern Maine at Augusta.

Expand in fuller detail, a supporting statement with detailed, itemized budget. Funding for current application is contingent upon submission of detailed budget and attendance report for any previous years' grants.

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| IV. a. Total funding required for program: | \$ 15,760 total |
| | 5,560 UM |
| b. Amount committed by applicant organization: | \$ 500 |
| c. Amount committed by USM at Augusta | \$ 10,200 |
| d. Amount requested from other funding sources | \$ |
| e. Amount requested of Cultural Affairs/DLS Committee: | \$ 5,060 |

Signature of responsible organization officer/date: _____

SIGNATURE

DATE

SEND COMPLETED APPLICATION TO: CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
C/O PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
200 ALUMNI HALL, CAMPUS

\$1500

The Women in the Curriculum and Women's Studies Program is planning to bring Iranian author and artist Marjane Satrapi to the University of Maine on October 19, 2006 in cooperation with the University of Southern Maine at Augusta where she will speak on October 18. We are very excited by this opportunity.

Satrapi's most famous work tells the story of her childhood in Iran. She was born in 1969 and experienced both the Islamic Revolution and the long war with Iraq. The work was published in four volumes in France where it was compared to Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and won numerous prestigious comic book awards including the "Prix Alph'Art", the "Coup de Coeur", and the "Prix du Lion" in Belgium. It has been translated into Spanish, Italian, German, and Dutch, in addition to other languages, and has now been published in two volumes in the U.S. as *Persepolis* and *Persepolis 2*. Her other books include *Embroideries* and *Chicken and Plums* (forthcoming 2006) as well as several children's books. Satrapi currently lives in Paris where her illustrations appear regularly in magazines and newspapers. She also writes an occasional op ed for the New York Times.

Satrapi's works have been reviewed and praised around the world. Newsweek, Off Our Backs, Rolling Stone, the New Yorker, and others have critiqued her work, always with high praise. In 2004 MS Magazine listed *Persepolis* as one of the ten "must read" books. Gloria Steinem noted, "You've never seen anything like *Persepolis*--the intimacy of a memoir, the irresistibility of a comic book, and the political depth of the conflict between fundamentalism and democracy. Marjane Satrapi may have given us a new genre."

Satrapi's works are among a handful of graphic novels which are catching the attention of a wide public audience. In the August 22, 2005 edition of Newsweek International, Rana Foroohar wrote: "If you have any doubt about the power of comic books consider that they are now required reading for the future military leaders of America. In order to graduate from the U.S. military academy at West Point cadets from the class of 2006 must study *Persepolis*...It's a wise choice for the syllabus, not only because it is such a compelling read but because the simple black and white frames of Satrapi's family likely give the cadets a better understanding of Iran than any academic text, newspaper report or strategy ever could." Azar Nafisi, author of *Reading Lolita in Teheran*, chose *Persepolis* as one of four books written about the Islamic world that encouraged important dialogue across religions. Here at the University I have used *Persepolis* in my Introduction to Women's Studies classes and find that it encourages students to think about war and its impact on women. Students invariably tell me that they wished all our books could be written like this.

Peter Schjeldahl noted in his review of graphic novels for the New Yorker on October 17, 2005, "Graphic novels--pumped up comics--are to many in their teens and twenties what poetry once was--before bare words lost their cachet." Of all those he reviewed he deemed *Persepolis* "the best first-person graphic novel to date", and *Persepolis 2* "the second best." "They suggest a number of rules for the form: have a compelling life, remember everything, tell it straight, and be very brave." Satrapi's "uncanny way of incorporating exposition, with nary a stumble in her pell-mell narrative momentum, immerses us in the lore of Iranian history and culture. Drawn in an inky and crude visual style that is as direct as a slap, the books track her imaginings and her passions, which are wonderfully responsive, though usually inadequate to the realities of the

situation. It's a comic strategy that maintains buoyancy even in the face of the oppression, torture, and death of people dear to her, without for a moment treating the ordeals of others as secondary to her own."

Students respond as positively to her presence as to her writing as attested by the *Oberlin Review* of October 14, 2005 which reported on her visit to campus. The reporter noted that "throngs of students" filled the hall, gave Satrapi two standing ovations (when she finished her talk and when she finished answering questions), and later stood in a line "dozens long" to buy her book. As one student noted, 'She made it okay for us to laugh at sad things.'

Budget

This program is being co-sponsored with the University of Southern Maine at Augusta. USM will provide 10,200.

Honorarium	15,000
Travel	600
Overnights (2@80)	160
Total	15,760
<u>Total UMaine</u>	<u>5, 560</u>

Preliminary Report on Cultural Affairs Committee Funding for Spring 2006

Today marks the end of a very successful women's history celebration. This year's celebration was generously funded by the Cultural Affairs committee and we therefore include an attendance report.

The attendance for Women's History Celebration 2006, "The Spaces We Occupy: Women Working in Maine and Beyond", March 1 to March 30, was as follows:

Oral History: Students Appreciating the Art of Nursing: 22
Life After Lawsuits? Advocating for Women's Rights in 2006: 28
Opening the Club: Overcoming Gender-Related Barriers to School Administration: 20
The Murder of Mary Bean and Other Stories: 48
The Women of Black Bangor, 1880-1950: 36
Vera Drake: 40
Activism in the Women's Studies Classroom: 21
Emma's Revolution: 75
More than Consumers: Women Shaping the Global Economy: 12
Maine Women Living on the Land: 30
International Women's Day Celebration 107
Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks: 24

(Interview from Pantheon with Marjane Satrapi)

Why I Wrote Persepolis

From the time I came to France in 1994, I was always telling stories about life in Iran to my friends. We'd see pieces about Iran on television, but they didn't represent my experience at all. I had to keep saying, "No, it's not like that there." I've been justifying why it isn't negative to be Iranian for almost twenty years. How strange when it isn't something I did or chose to be?

After I finished university, there were nine of us, all artists and friends, working in a studio together. That group finally said, "Do something with your stories." They introduced me to graphic novelists. Spiegelman was first. And when I read him, I thought "Jesus Christ, it's possible to tell a story and make a point this way." It was amazing.

Writing a Graphic Novel is Like Making a Movie

*People always ask me, "Why didn't you write a book?" But that's what **Persepolis** is. To me, a book is pages related to something that has a cover. Graphic novels are not traditional literature, but that does not mean they are second-rate. Images are a way of writing. When you have the talent to be able to write and to draw it seems a shame to choose one. I think it's better to do both.*

We learn about the world through images all the time. In the cinema we do it, but to make a film you need sponsors and money and 10,000 people to work with you. With a graphic novel, all you need is yourself and your editor.

*Of course, you have to have a very visual vision of the world. You have to perceive life with images otherwise it doesn't work. Some artists are more into sound; they make music. The point is that you have to know what you want to say, and find the best way of saying it. It's hard to say how **Persepolis** evolved once I started writing. I had to learn how to write it as a graphic novel by doing.*

What I Wanted to Say

I'm a pacifist. I believe there are ways to solve the world's problems. Instead of putting all this money to create arms, I think countries should invest in scholarships for kids to study abroad. Perhaps they could become good and knowledgeable professors in their own countries. You need time for that kind of change though.

I have been brought up open-minded. If I didn't know any people from other countries, I'd think everyone was evil based on news stories. But I know a lot of people, and know that there is no such thing as stark good and evil. Isn't it possible there is the same amount of evil everywhere?

*If people are given the chance to experience life in more than one country, they will hate a little less. It's not a miracle potion, but little by little you can solve problems in the basement of a country, not on the surface. That is why I wanted people in other countries to read **Persepolis**, to see that I grew up just like other children.*

It's so rewarding to see people at my book signings who never read graphic novels. They say that when they read mine they became more interested. If it opens these people's eyes not to believe what they hear, I feel successful.

You Have to Think Freely to Know What to Write

*My parents were very proud when they read **Persepolis**. If I criticize them once in a while, it's because it's the truth, and they laugh. My father always says, "It is only an idiot who never changes his mind." My parents accept that times change, and they are not right anymore. They've taught me that you can make mistakes.*

They were extremely open-minded about what I said and they were demanding. I'm also tender with them because they were magnificent parents. They gave me the most important thing -- the freedom of thinking and deciding for myself. The best present anyone can receive is not being formatted because the world or a religion wants you to be.

Report to the Cultural Affairs Committee on the WIC/WST Visit from Marjane Satrapi

This past fall the Distinguished Lecture Series/Cultural Affairs Committee awarded the Women in the Curriculum and Women's Studies Program with \$1,500 to bring contemporary graphic novelist and illustrator, Marjane Satrapi, to the University of Maine. The result was an extremely enjoyable, informative introduction to the UMaine community of women in Iran and in Muslim society. Satrapi gave two talk—"A Conversation with Marjane Satrapi hosted by Alicia Anstead of the Bangor Daily News" and "Iran in the Revolution and After: Graphic Novelist Marjane Satrapi Reflects on Her Life and Work." In addition she was hosted at a dinner reception which brought together members of the community, faculty, staff, and students at Persian Night, a delicious meal organized by Lily Alavi and hosted by the Thomas Lynch University Club.

I am still hearing reverberations from the visit as students in my Introduction to Women's Studies class and my Women and Globalization class draw on her talks as we develop further our conversations on Muslim women. While Satrapi brilliantly, and with humor, started the conversation, her visit enabled us to reach out to others of the UMaine community. Art students and faculty came to the talks and the whole event provided an important link with the Iranian community in this quarter of the state. An Iranian Women's Studies student took her out to lunch and was affirmed in her academic pursuit. The visit was all the more important as Satrapi's new film based on her first novel, *Persepolis*, just won a prize at this year's Cannes Festival. (We will be trying to get a copy.)

Our budget was as follows:

*Honorarium	5,000
Travel	947
Four Points Hotel	100
Food for Persian Night	460
Publicity	140

Total: 6,647

We received:

Cultural Affairs Committee	1,500
**Miscellaneous Departments and Programs	1,105
Anne Margaret Johnstone	
Memorial Lecture Fund	1,500
Student Government	2,500

Total: 6,605

*UMA paid \$10,000 of the \$15,000 honorarium. Those on this campus who contributed were English Department, History Department, Peace Studies, Office of Multicultural

Student Programs, Division of Student Affairs, and Communication and Journalism
Department.